

Letter from Mabel Hubbard Bell to Alexander Graham Bell, October 18, 1901

Twin Oaks Friday Oct 18th 1901 My dear Alec,

I was so sorry to find yesterday that my letter to Daisy written some days ago had not gone yet, because it was so carefully put away inside another sheet that neither he or Mr McCurdy could find it. But there is no reason why either of you should complain for you haven't sent me anything but one telegram. and you know that I at least like letters, — even type-written letters. Speaking of this reminds me that since you have taken to whitening history, you should not complain of the staleness of letters on the ground that they are history! We have been through a period of excitement in the family, which I wished Daisy had been here to participate in. For a few hours yesterday we thought that we were — ! ? GOING TO LOSE CHARLES! What do you think of that for excitement? I had a letter from him, (we are still out here.) saying that the position of second steward at the White House was vacant and with a letter from me he could very likely get it. It was not the increased pay that was so much as the chance of getting to the highest thing in his "line", as it might be a stepping stone to the Chief-Stewardship with a salary of eighteen hundred a year, and the reputation. Of course I did not feel that we could stand in his way under such circumstances, so before I left Twin Oaks I had begun enquiries for other servants, white this time, for I did not believe that I could get any other colored man to fill Charles' place. Then we went in and interviewed Charles, with the result that he telephoned the White House, and found that the place had in the meanwhile been secured by a man from New York, for sixty dollars. Charles said that he would not have accepted less than seventy, and the regular wage was seventy-five, but there was so much competition, that it went for less. He said that he would not think of taking a place in a private family again, and he would not have thought of trying for this but that it was such a step upward. As it was, he evidently felt so uncomfortable about asking my permission to apply that he delayed

Library of Congress

too long. 2 He had not applied for it, or thought of it until his friend the chief steward came to him, and said that with my letter he would have a good chance. And I think it is the President's loss as well as our gain. Charles said that he would have to hire his own room, so that the difference in wages would not be so great, it was the position, and all that it might lead to in enabling him to settle himself and marry that attracted him. He felt that it was such a chance that he ought to take it if possible, on the other hand I don't think he wants to leave us, and especially not this winter when he had promised to stay, and when he felt it would be particularly hard for me. He was really very nice about it, and i thought came out very well.

I have engaged my cook. It it Mr McKinley's, and she charges a lot, but Charles said he thought she was such a good manager that it would pay me to take her as she would save her wages in the butcher's bills. So I have engaged her on that understanding. Grace thought she had the crow over me because her white cook comes for ten dollars less, and is a beautiful one, but when I said that mine expected to do all the work, and not want any help unless we had fourteen servants, she had nothing to say, for she has to pay for a kitchen maid.. Then I telephoned to the Providence Hospital, and got them to give me the technical name for the trouble from which Florence suffered, and wrote to Dr Sowers. He came to see me and said that he knew all about it, and that it was Not of a cancerous nature, and that Florence was as well and free from it as if she had never had it at all. It was he repeated "as if it had never been." So that he thought her an excellent person to have charge of the little one. So this seems all right. The cook thought she could get me a laundress, and nor the only remaining member of my family to get is the chambermaid. Lucy's daughter is coming up, and from her account has been very well educated as she can do anything from sewing, cooking to type-writing and steneographing. She has a splendid character from her teacher for both last accomplishments. She is coming to me every day to help around until the congressmen return, then she wants to be steneographer. Now that I have told you of my household, 3 I am ready to tell you of what is much more interesting our call on your father. They came home Wednesday evening,

Library of Congress

but I did not hear of it until Thursday yesterday morning, as they did not come when expected. I couldn't possibly go over in the morning, but Bert and I went after dinner. I thought it was so nice of Bert, our going was his own proposal. He wanted to go, and would have gone alone. Your Father seems stronger and brighter than for long, and is so happy to be at home on his own sofa. We came in and found him reading there while the rest of the family, Mr Hitz, Miss Mace and Mr McCurdy beside Mrs Bell were playing whist right behind him. He was very much pleased with the Duke and Duchess. He said they were so very cordial and friendly, and so much interested. The Duke he said looks better and brighter than his pictures. They have a very good photograph of the performance, and your father is far and away the most prominent person on the stage. He looks as if he were the venerable magistrate bestowing a diploma on two much interested but rather shy young English people. You can see that the Duchess is English from the very back of her, and nearly a head taller than her husband. It really must have been an awfully nice incident in their Canadian trip. I wish now that I had seriously tried to send them my tomatoes, it would have been a nice finish, coming from you, and I am certain that they didn't get such tomatoes all the time they were in Canada. Mr Hitz looks horribly, and is evidently admittedly an invalid. They had the room very hot for him, and his face was very much changed, terribly this shrunken and bloodless. But his eyes are all the brighter.

It is perfectly lovely here now, bright fresh and bracing, Baddeck weather. I went to the Fflouke wedding yesterday. It was very beautiful, and the bride and her maids were very handsome, but they came in for all the world as if they were in a funereal. My heart went down into my tight new boots, just from looking at them. They never, any one of them raised their eyes from the floor, and it was like a theatrical performance, and as evidently studied. The pathetic part was that the bride came in all alone, as her father cannot walk, and awaited her sitting on a 4 chair within the railed off portion. As for her mother, she just received, and then stood behind the white ribbon along way off like any other spectator. I did not see why in her own house she could not have stood near the child she bad borne. They said she did not help her dress, or anything, and I am pretty sure that she did not

Library of Congress

greet her for long afterwards. Altogether I came away very well satisfied with the way that we had managed our wedding a year ago, even if we did forget the man's favors, and Elsie's train wasn't half as long. The bride wore a long lace veil off her face. There was a lovely old Quaker grandmother, but they did not make much of her, which was missing a very pretty mis-en-scene, to say the least. Gip was far and away the most conspicuous visitor, and very pretty as well. She said she heard Mr Pulido say to Grace in French "What a beautiful body your niece has"! Her dress was pal blue cloth with pale purple trimming, and she had a big picture at to match with a big blue austriche feather, and bunch of violets..

With which bit of millinery I will say Good-bye

Much love to my little girl, and to Bessie. Please write to Mr McGee, and to Baron Richthofen, and to Mr White.

Yours lovingly Mabel